SOME RECENT DISCOVERIES IN NORTH BIHAR

By

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I

Bahera Excavations

Mithilā, the land of hoary antiquity and unbroken cultural continuity, has yet remained outside the pale of archaeological survey. Mithilā possessed and still possesses some very important archaeological and historical sites, though most of them have been denuded by the ravages of the ferocious rivers like Kośī, Balāna, Kamlā, Gaṇḍaka, Bāgmati and others. The ignorance of the local people has played no insignificant part in their destruction. Invaluable objects of immense antiquarian value from Mahiśi, Aśurgarḥ, Patuāhā, Balirājagarḥ, Jayamaṅglāgarh, Naulāgarḥ, Kandāhā, Bīrpur and others, have been discovered and destroyed. Images have been dug out and sold. Coins have been used for ornamental purposes. Even a cursory glance over the *Mithilā-Māhātmya* will reveal to us the actual number of important archaeological sites. Even as late as the thirteenth century of the Christian era, there were various towns of importance in Mithilā as is evident from the account of a Tibetan traveller Dharmasvāmī and the writings of Chaṇḍeśvara and Jyotirīśvara. The Karṇāṭas[1] were the last independent Hindu rulers of Mithilā and they had to bear the brunt of Muslim invasion both from the east and the west and naturally they had to shift their headquarters in accordance with the time and circumstances. Such places and villages yet preserve the memories of those kings and I am confident that tradition supported by archaeological excavations will give out the truth.

Thanks to the untiring labour and undaunted courage of Dr. Brajkishore Varma, a leading Maithilī writer and critic, we have at our disposal some excavated sites of ancient Mithilā which call for special study at the hands of specialists. I personally visited these excavated sites on the 1st of January 1955 and examined the finds. It is true that these sites have not yielded any inscriptional evidence, but the brick-temple structure (Vide—Plate BE-1) and other accompanying finds sufficiently indicate that these sites belong to period between 13th and 15th century A.D. The lack of

[1] Cf. My article—'*The Karṇāṭas of Mithilā*' in the *ABORI*—XXXV. 91 ff; Upendra Thākur—"*History of Mithilā*" (abbreviated *TM*) Chapter V.

funds and absence of skilled excavators must have accounted for the loss of some very valuable things which, possibly, did not seem important to the amateurs, but even then, the existing structure is sufficient to enable us to make out a case.

Bahera is a police station of the Sadar subdivision of the district of Darbhangā. The whole village is dotted with mounds. Within a radius of fifteen to twenty miles there are no less than fifteen mounds of considerable importance and some of them are associated with the ancient Buddhist sites. Some metal images of the Pāla period were discovered long long ago and only a few years back two punchmarked coins were also discovered (Vide—Plate-PAC—Coins Nos 1 and 2). The destructive agency has worked in such a break-neck speed that it is now difficult to bring out reality, in its correct perspective, from the limbo of oblivion. A brief account of the excavations, conducted under the guidance of Dr. Varma, is given below.

(1) MOUND OF HAIHATTA DEVI: There is an image of Haihaṭṭa Devī bearing inscription.[2] The village is known as Hāvi Dih. The transcription of the inscription, supplied to me by Dr. Varma, gives an altogether different reading, noted below, of the last line. Line 4 of the published text is missing in this transcription and the fourth and the fifth line are as follows:—"सुविदितौ हैहट्ट देवी शिवा कर्मा श्री जयराजकेलि विहिता 5th line (New) सौभाग्यमार्गेरता"[3]

There is a temple of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa at Hāvidih and the following illegible transcription has been supplied to me by Dr. Varma—

ऊप्मीष्यदवंमावर:

Hāvidih is only a corruption of Hāvipattan.

(2) KANTHU DIH: An image of Durgā was discovered here.

(3) BARAHI BADHA: The site of the present excavation.

(4) KORHANSGARH
(5) SASANDIH
(6) STABLE OF RAJA HARWA
(7) HAREM OF RAJA HARWA
(8) AMINISTRATIVE CENTRE

All these places are associated with the legendary king Harwā who is said to have fought against LORIKA of the famous Lorika ballad

(9) BATTLE-FIELD

The folk-tales and songs, preserved in the region, clearly indicate the geographical features of these allied mounds and traditions point to a great centre of activities in those areas in the first quarter of the 14th century A.D. Jyotirīśvara mentions '*Lorika*' ballad in his *Varṇanaratnākara*. The names of these mounds excite our curiosity to go into further details of the story. The lower class people of that area still cling to these legends

[2] Cf. R. K. Choudhary—"*Inscriptions of Bihar*", p. 125, No. F.

[3] Here we have to bear in mind that Saubhāgya Devī was the Queen of Karṇāṭa King Narasiṁhadeva.

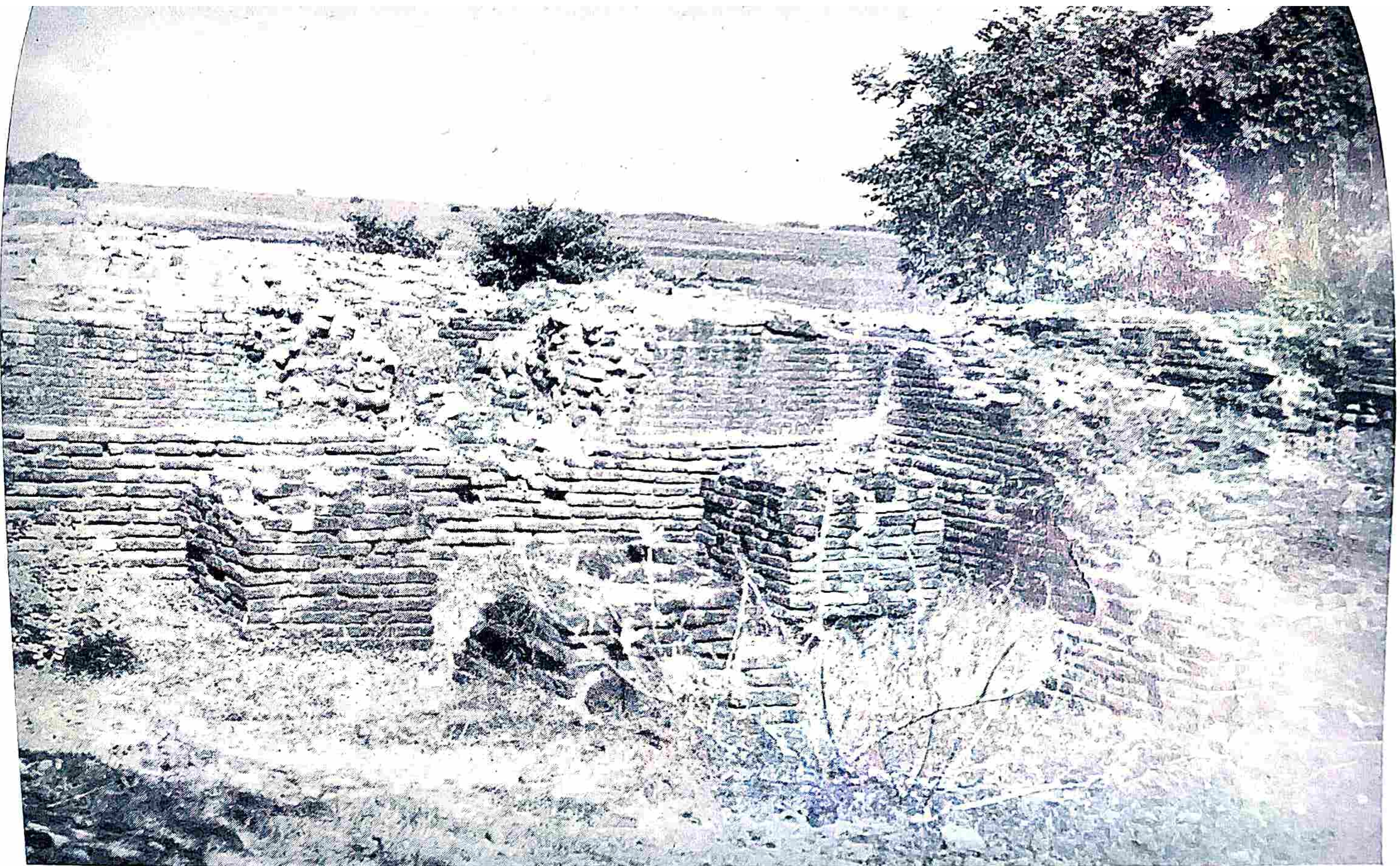
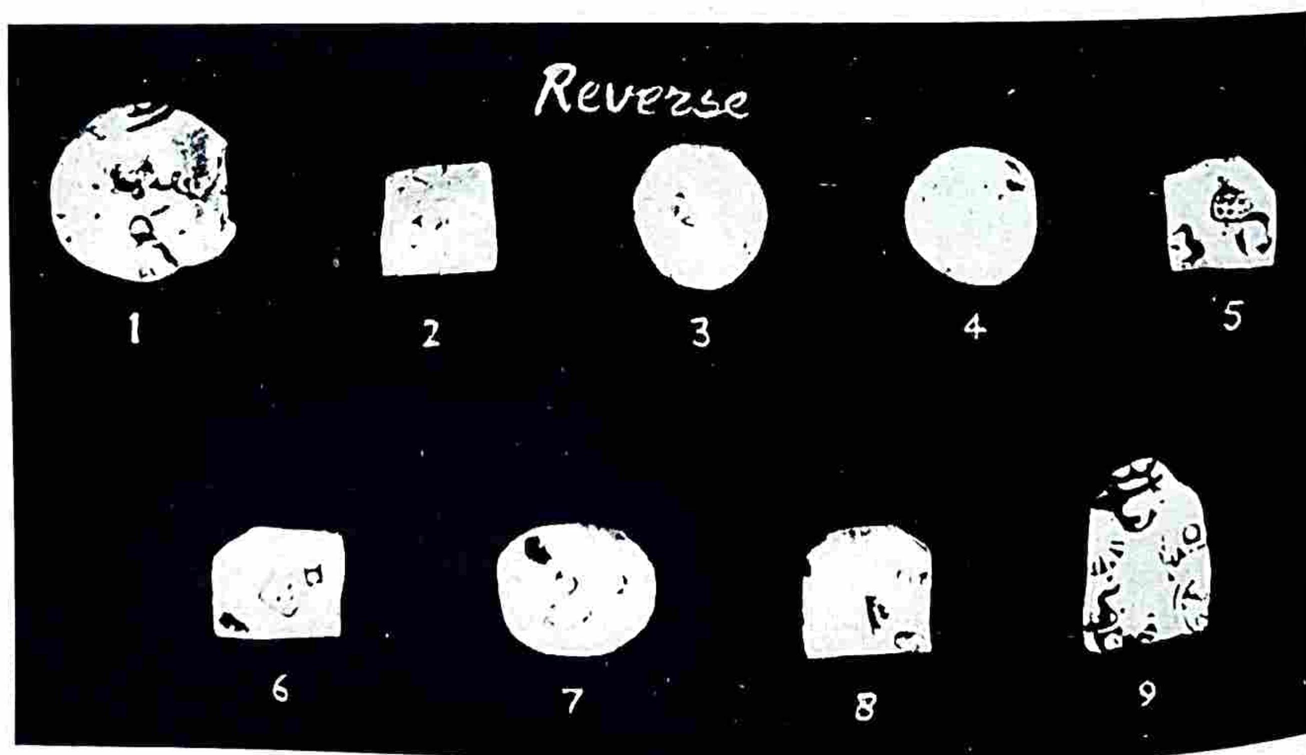
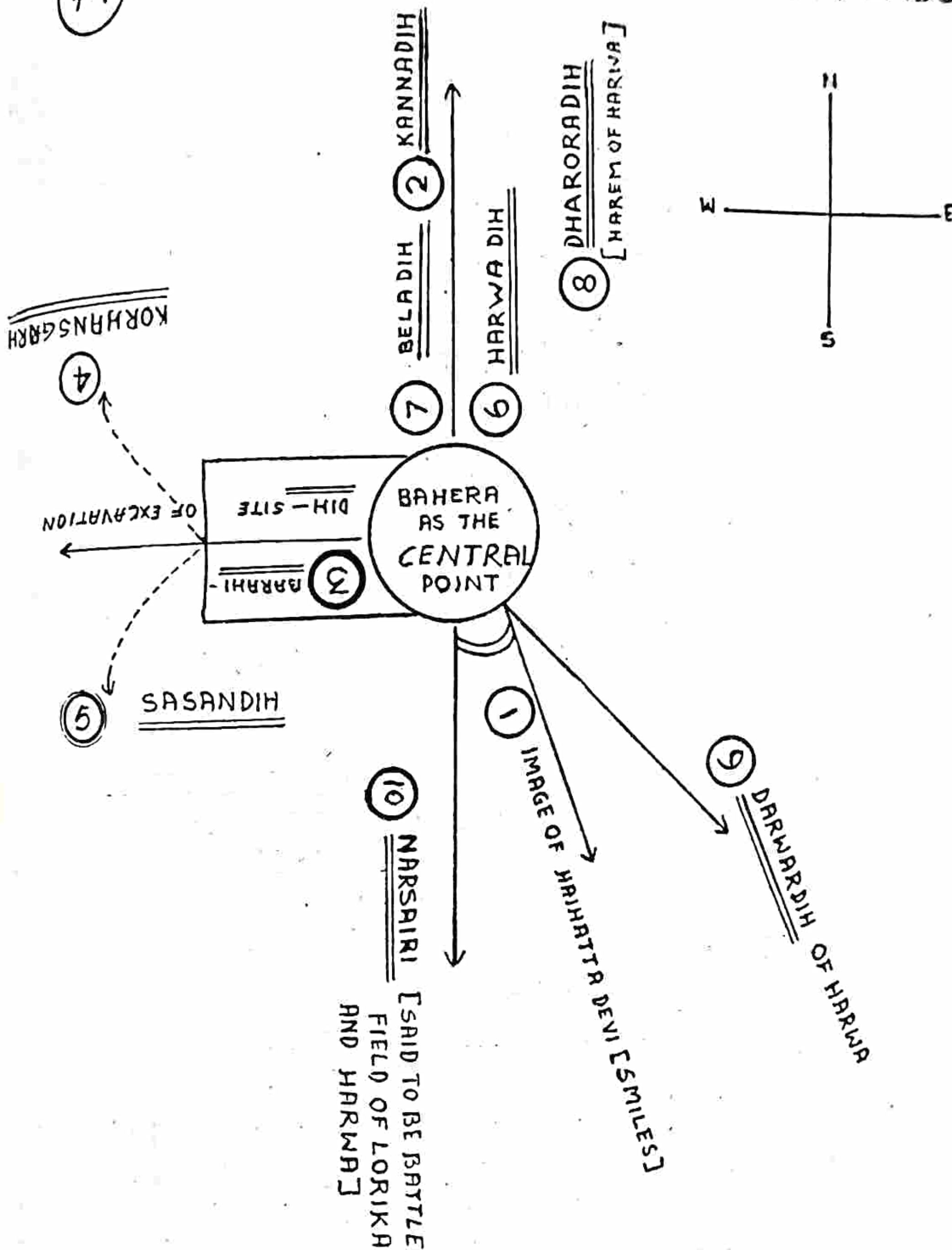


Fig. BE-1—Temple Structure





PAC—Coin Nos. 1 & 2 are from Baherā (Darbhanga)
Coin Nos. 3 to 9 are from Patuāhā (Saharsa)



so tenaciously that it is difficult to disbelieve them outright. The folk songs, associated with different stata of lower class people, are as follows:

Songs	People
(i) *Lorika*	Gopa
(ii) *Salheśa*[1]	Dusādha
(iii) *Nāikā*	Teli
(iv) *Bālārāma*	Kṣhatri
(v) *Dinābhadrī*	Muśahara
(vi) *Sashia*	Khatawe

(*vii*)	*Gopithakur*	Barhi
(*viii*)	*Dayalasiṁha*	Malāha
(*ix*)	*Naikā-Banjārā*	Bania
(*x*)	*Kumar Bṛjbhāna* & *Kamlā*	Malāha

The *Lorika* gives the following boundary of Mithilā—

"पूरब जे **पूरनियां** पुज लौं
पच्छिम रे **बिहार**
उत्तर जे **नेपाल** पुजलिऐ
दक्षिण गंगा धार
रौता जे **तिलकेश्वर** पुजलौं
झाड़ी **बैजनाथ**
भोरे उठिके हाथ उठेलिऐ
दिनकर दीनानाथ

(B) *Description of the Mounds*

These sites, under review, are situated on the confluence of the rivers, Balāna and Jībachha. The famous '*Rajokhari*'[5], of Śivasiṁha's fame, is situated at a distance of only six miles from these sites and so also is another important mound *Borāmdih*.[6] The excavations at Bahera (also called Chaugāmā) were carried out in the months of October and November 1954 by Dr. Vạrma. Pandit Hariśchandra Miśra, Sri N. K. Varma and the writer of these lines visited the spot in January 1955 and we made a careful study of the excavated sites, the results of which are given below. Three mounds were taken up for excavation :

Mound No. 1 :

Length from east to west	120 ft.
Breadth from north to south	100 ft.
Height	22 ft.

This mound was fully and carefully excavated. Due to the ignorance of the excavators, proper stratification could not be done and recorded with the result that the finds have lost much of their archaeological value. In course of the excavation, the remains of a temple came to be discovered. The temple was in a perfect state of preservation. Only the roof of the

[4] शलहेस क गीत; लोरिक—have been collected, by my wife Smt. Shanti Devi and my brother-in-law, Sri Benode Bihari Varma, for me. These songs have been collected from various sources and I hope to publish them.

[5] पोखरि रजोखरि श्रौर सब पोखरा
राजा शिवई सिंह श्रौर सब छोकरा—It has been generally translated as "the Tank at Rajokhari is indeed a tank, all others are mere ponds; King Śivasiṁha was indeed a King, all others are mere princelets"—Rajokhari is the name of a village where there was a very large tank said to have been dug by Śivasiṁha (Cf. *IA*-XIV. 187)

[6] In the vicinity of the area, there are many more mounds. The site of Harisiṁhapur is also said to be adjacent to Hāvidih and Ladaho. Images have also been discovered from Harisiṁhapur.

temple could not be found out. The appearance of the temple structure showed that it was destroyed by some agency as the central figure or the main image of the temple was missing while other objects, *e.g.*, *Jaladharī*, *Nālā*, etc, were there. The inner apartment of the temple was 7×7 ft. and the depth of the temple went to the length of 15 ft. below, after which there was only virgin soil. Thus the temple stood at a distance of 15 ft. above from the virgin soil. The outline of the temple is evident from the sketch (vide—Plate—BE-2). Altars, made of bricks and stones, were discovered from the ruins and also an image of Vārāha in black stone. There are fine artistic designs on the brick pillars.

The temple structure is in keeping with the designs and details, prescribed in our ancient texts on temple architecture. The Purāṇic details have been critically maintained by the architect here in this case. Temples were erected here and there by persons for attaining religious merits and before a temple was constructed, specialists in this branch were consulted Even the medieval digest writers including Vidyāpati have devoted their attention to this problem. The idealist concept of *Garbha-griha*, as outlined in the *Hindu Temple* by Stella Kramrisch, seems to have been followed by the artists who erected the temple at Baherā. It is true that the artistic flavour of earlier temples is not there. The reason is not far to seek. We know that after 1000 A.D., art tended to become stereotyped and the formulae became too rigid to allow very much initiative to the individual artists. In that sense, the images and structures of the Karṇāṭa period of Mithilā seem to be monotonous and uninspiring. The Karṇāṭas had not the leisure to devote all round attention to this side and hence the monotony.

The discovery of a temple at Baherā should be taken as a unique find in North Bihar. No temple structure has yet been discovered in North Bihar except the one mentioned by Spooner. Spooner's discovery in Vaiśālī led him to propound a theory of the Tirhut temple type. If we view this discovery in that background, it would not be unwise to suggest that the discovery of Bahera temple in the very heart of Mithilā is remarkable. A study of the whole area reveals to us that it was once the capital of some Karṇāṭa ruler, who possibly shifted to this place and along with a temporary capital, they also erected a temple, which was demolished by enemies. Just in and around the area, there were burial grounds which were considered sacred by the Muslim populace there. The general conclusion can be that the Muslims, during the course of their victorious campaign, destroyed these sites and established their stronghold there. Even today, Bahera is inhabited by a large number of Muslim population.

As stated above, the temple is constructed in accordance with rituals prescribed for the same. In the centre was the main god (possibly Mahādeva) and this presumption is based on the fact that an image of Gaṇeśa

was found there. In front of the temple just after the entrance gate there were four pillars acting as a base for the lower roof containing the bell and also minor deities within the precinct. Though two temples are said to have been discovered, the ruins of the second temple do not give any idea of its shape and architectural design. Temple architecture found favour with the rulers of Mithilā. Dr. Spooner characterised them as "the Tirhut types of Temples". According to Spooner, the Tirhut type was utilitarian in character, having a small square room to contain the image with a narrow portico. The Tirhut type stood for perfectly plain and undecorated walls.[7] On the basis of a study of some important temples of Tirhut, Spooner observed that it "marked the utmost culmination of temple architecture" illustrating the development of "this style". Important finds from the Mound No. 1 are:

—Temples, Altars, Pillars, *Nālā*, *Jalaḍhari*, potsherds and pottery pieces, decorated bricks, Incense burner etc. Āsana made of stone, *Gaṇeśa* & *Vārāha* etc.

From the discoveries, it appears that the phallic emblem of Śiva was more popular in the dominion of the Karṇāṭas. Large numbers of *phalli* have been discovered in different parts of Mithilā. *Ekamukhaliṅga* variety is the commonest one, though *Chaturmukhaliṅga*[8] has also been noticed by me in different parts of Tirhut, the best specimen being one at Bheetha belonging to the Pāla period. The *arghya* and *Nālā* (both at Baherā and Birpur) bear wavy incisions indicating that the water usually poured on the top of the *liṅga* passing along the surface of the four busts on the *liṅga*. The Baherā sculptures are finely carved specimen of the 13th-14th century and are in keeping with the Karṇāṭa tradition as these show close agreement with the plastic representation of South Indian texts. The cult of Sadāśiva was very popular in South India.[9]

Mound No. 2

The following articles were discovered from this mound:

(*a*) Cup like altar having signs of *Vedis* and *yajña*.

(*b*) On a corner of the above altar, an image of the *Mahādeva* (vide—Plate—BE-3) was found along with the *Jalaḍharī*.

(*c*) The most important finds from these mounds are the two thin bricks—on one of which is inscribed the *Aśvamedha type* horse and on the other is inscribed a beautiful lotus petal.[10] (vide—Plate—BE-4). These two decorated bricks are rare in the present finds. I am not in a position to assess their actual importance.

[7] *JBORS*—pp. 121-134

[8] *G.D. College Bulletin Series No. 1.*

[9] *JASB*—XXIX (N.S.) p. 171 ff.

[10] For these sketches and a number of photographs in this article, I am obliged to Sri Kunjabehari Sharma, Sāhityaratna, of the local Chitrakala Studiio.

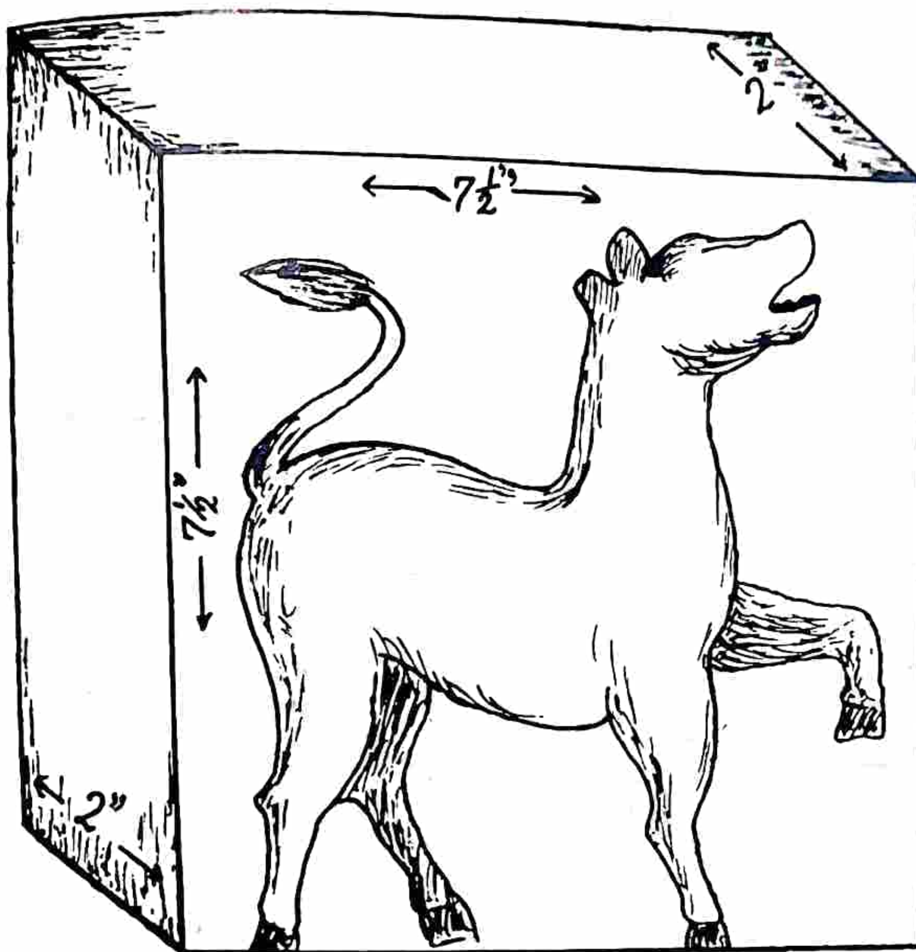


Fig. BE-2—Sketch of an Aśvamedha type horse on a brick

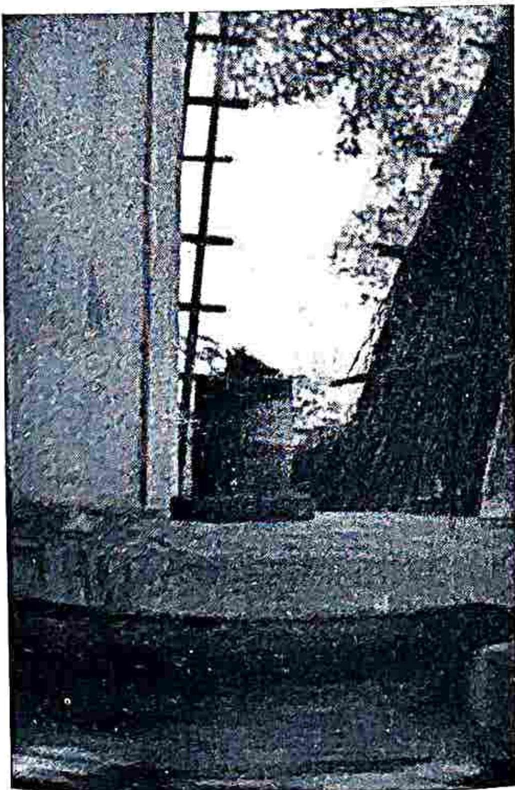


Fig. BE-3—Mahādeva



Fig. BE-4—Varāha

I am informed by my esteemed friend, Dr. V. S. Agrawal of the Hindu University, that such types of bricks have recently been discovered at Dehradun.

Mound No. 3

This mound did not yield anything valuable except a few pottery pieces. The area seems to have been totally robbed off. The mound reveals to us the actual nature of destruction wrought by the enemies. While the temple area was protected, others were left in lurch. Ashes and human bones have been discovered. The layers show different strata and it appears that the area remained in occupation continuously till the 14th century, when it was deserted for good.

The whole area calls for a more scientific study on the basis ofarchaeological excavations. Only after the scientific excavations of all themounds, it will be possible to evaluate their historical significance. The finds, hitherto discovered, prove unmistakably that it was an important centre of the Karṇāṭas of Mithilā. Since they were hemmed in by Muslim powers all round, it was only natural for them to maintain so many places as their capitals. The present site seems to be one of such places. Bahera lay on the route[11] from Motihāri to Purnea and hence its importance. Even in such temporary capitals, the temple was a necessity. I am inclined to believe that during the reign of Śakrasiṁhadeva, the Karṇāṭas of Mithilā shifted their capital to this side of Tirhut and it was surrounded an all sides by small rivers. Śakrasiṁha is the traditional founder of modern Sakuri on the Darbhaṅgā-Nirmali section of the North-eastern Railway. The Haihaṭṭa Devī image inscription lends support to my supposition. Local legends state that Gaṅgadeva had his citadel at Laherā Rājā, a village in Bahera Police Station. Harasiṁhapur is said to have been the capital of the Karṇātas and Lehrā is associated with Śivasiṁha.

The finds further reveal to us that in matters of art and architecture, the Karṇātas maintained and kept up the traditions of the Pālas. All images are in black stone and the plastic representation of the Vārāha (Plate—**BE**.-5) has got a fine polish. It can be taken as one of the finest examples of the plastic art. The Bheeṭ-Bhagwānpur finds are the living examples of the artistic activities of the Karṇāṭas. The door frames of Bheeṭ-Bhagwānpur speak of the magnificent building architecture. The remnants of the Karṇāṭa art are found all over Mithilā and their tradition was later on maintained by the Oinwāras as will be evident from the Kandāhā door frames and broken stone pieces of Chaṇḍi-Asthāna.[11a]

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[11] See my forthcoming Book—*History of Muslim Rule in Tirhut* (1200-1765)

[11a] Only recently, I visited village Baur in the district of Darbhanga where some relics of past have been unearthed. The Village was under Kośī for the last ten years and in 1958, when the flood receded and the area was thought under cultivation, these relics were unearthed in course of digging. Golden bangles, silver ornaments, stone implements, stone *Chakkī*, being sized bricks, pottery pieces and one seal; said to be inscribed

II

The newly discovered Pala images from Birpur

Birpur and Baraipurā, about twelve miles north of Begusarai, have yielded some very useful finds of the Pāla period in recent times. Among the various archaeological sites of North Monghyr, Birpur is one and recent discovery over there confirms this view. The whole area is dotted with mounds and if excavated and studied carefully, interesting finds of different periods of our history are sure to come to light. As early as 1918, Mr. Johnston noticed in the *JBORS* the discovery of a Sūrya image from Baraipura, a village bordering on Birpur. The recent discoveries at Birpur conclusively prove that Birpur was contemporaneous with Naulāgarh and Jayamaṅglāgarh.

The find spot of the present images, Birpur, is bounded on the west by Baraipurā, on the east by Birpur proper, on the north by the river Balāna and on the south again by Birpur. Birpur and Baraipurā are co-terminus with each other. About fifty years ago an image of Durgā (vide Plate-**BRA**—2) was discovered but no proper notice of the image was taken then. Baraipurā is bounded on the north by Jokia and the river Balāna, on the south by Birpur and on the west by the river Balāna and on the east by Birpur. These two villages are very old and ancient pottery pieces have been collected from these places.

In the middle of June 1958, while an old tank was being renovated under the Hard Manual Scheme of the Government of Bihar, specimens of broken stone pieces came to light. The poor and ignorant workers did not understand the importance of these finds and they went on digging. In the middle of the tank, at a particular place, these newly discovered images of the Pāla period were found deposited. These were brought up by the villagers. Since the college was closed, we did not visit the site of discovery on that very day. As the tank is situated just on the border of Birpur and Baraipurā, the villagers of these two villages fought over the possession of these finds. Tension grew until it was brought under control by the instant handling of the situation by the S.D.O., Begusarai. On 27th July, 1958 we started for the exploration of the site and our party consisted of Professors A. Kumar, Arun Kumar Sinha of G. D. College, Sri Balinath Singh Sharma, Sri Rambālak Singh and Sri Shivadani Singh, Prof. Janardan Kumar of L. S. College, Muzaffarpur, and the writer of these lines. Prof. Arun Kumar acted as our cameraman. We explored the site for about five hours and visited almost all the places where other old images were kept. Since no positive step was taken in right moment,

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were discovered. By the time, I came to know of it, valuable articles had been removed by interested persons. On the 18th of May 1959, I saw the site and examined the pottery pieces. A small terracotta object (possibly a dog) is preserved. Since the area is exposed to frequent floods, scientific exploration is impossible. Other sites are there. Most of these objects are now missing.

the various mounds of the villages have been levelled and finds have been grabbed by the villagers. A short account of the recent finds is given below:

RECENT FINDS

Plate No.	Name of the Image	Description & Note
BR-1	Nandī in Black-stone. It has a fine polish. It can be taken as one of the rare finds.	Nandī is Śiva's Vāhana. The image of Nandī, as it is, does not seem to form a part of any big image or any relief but an independent one. The face of the Nandī is raised upwards. Nandī has generally been shown looking upwards in sculptures. The present image is of a seated Nandī wearing necklaces along with a necklace of bells and other ornaments. Weighs about thirty maunds.
BR-2	Dancing Gaṇeśa in Blackstone.	Dancing Gaṇeśa in the most favourite deity and is generally found in all the temples either by himself or with his parents. Gaṇeśa has been rightly called *Siddhidātā*, *i.e.*, recoverer of obstacles and bestower of success. The *Vāhana*, rat, is looking up at his master (as opposed to dancing on the rat) accompanied by two figures an each side. Here in the present image the *Vāhana* is at the bottom of the pedestal. Of the six hands of the God, the right one holds the tusk, axe and rosary, while the left ones bear rose, blue lotus and a pot of sweetmeet into which the trunk of the God is placed. The balance and sense of proportion have been maintained in the present image. It can be favourably compared with the Indian Museum (Calcutta) image of dancing Gaṇeśa (Cf. Plate No. XII in *History of Bengal*, Vol. I. No. 30).
BR-3	Viṣṇu (No. 1) in Blackstone	In the present image, the halo and the *Kirtimukha* are missing. Stone texture and cutting are also slightly different from the usual Pāla images. The lady on the right

		side of the image carries a '*Chawar*'. Such images have been found in Bengal (Cf. *HB*-I. Plate No. LXVIII-No. 165).
BR-4	Viṣṇu (Nos. 2 and 3) in Blackstone	Details are more clear in these two images. Here the headdress is more clearly marked and well-designed than in Viṣṇu No. 1 which seems to be plain in character. Here the *Kīrtimukha* is distinct. The lady on the left of the image carries Bīṇā. It is a fact that generally no conformity was maintained in tune with the textual prescription. These images have some similarity with the Baghaurā Viṣṇu image of the time of Mahipāla.
BR-5	Narasiṁha in Blackstone	The present image is depicted in manners usually found in other parts of India. The Narasiṁha images are not so numerous. The six handed figure has played a very important role in the development of Indian mythology. Its front pair of hand thrust into the entrails of the demon, the middle pair taking hold of its head and the back pair shown in two poses *Abhaya* and *Tarjani*.
BR-6	Navagraḥa in Blackstone	It seems to have been a part of some relief.
BR-7	Lokeśvara in Blackstone	Discovered about thirty years ago, now kept in a small village temple and worshipped.
BR-8	Exploration Party	Exploration site.[11b]
BRA-1	Kālī	Goddess of battle and victory.

[11b] Images of Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu and other Hindu gods and goddesses in black stone are in a perfect state of preservation at Bheet-Bhagwanpur (Dist. Darbhanga). Two long door frames are remarkable. Images incised on these door frames are marvellous from the artistic point of view. The image of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa has the inscription on the pedestal which has been only partially deciphered (Cf. ABORI-XXXV.; *TM*. Chapter V). In my recent visit to Bheet Bhagwanpur on May 16, 1959, I tried to read the remaining words of the inscription, but in vain. The archaeological department would do well by taking estampages of that inscription and take care to search out more. For the sake of study, preservation of these images is essential.

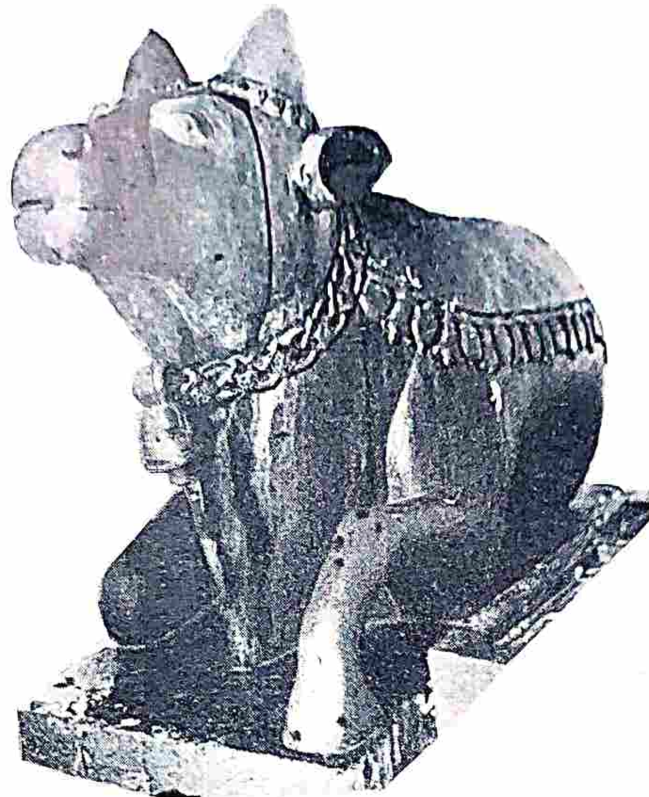


Fig. BR-1—Nandī (Birpur)

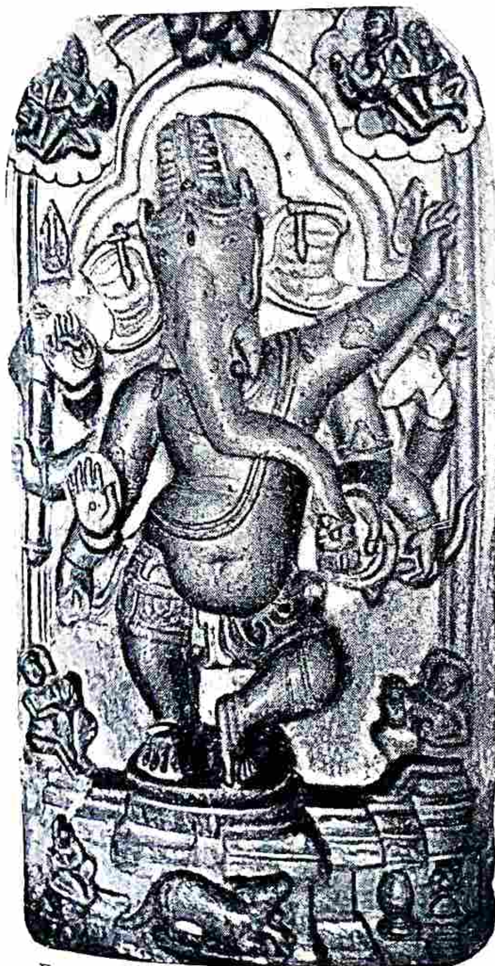
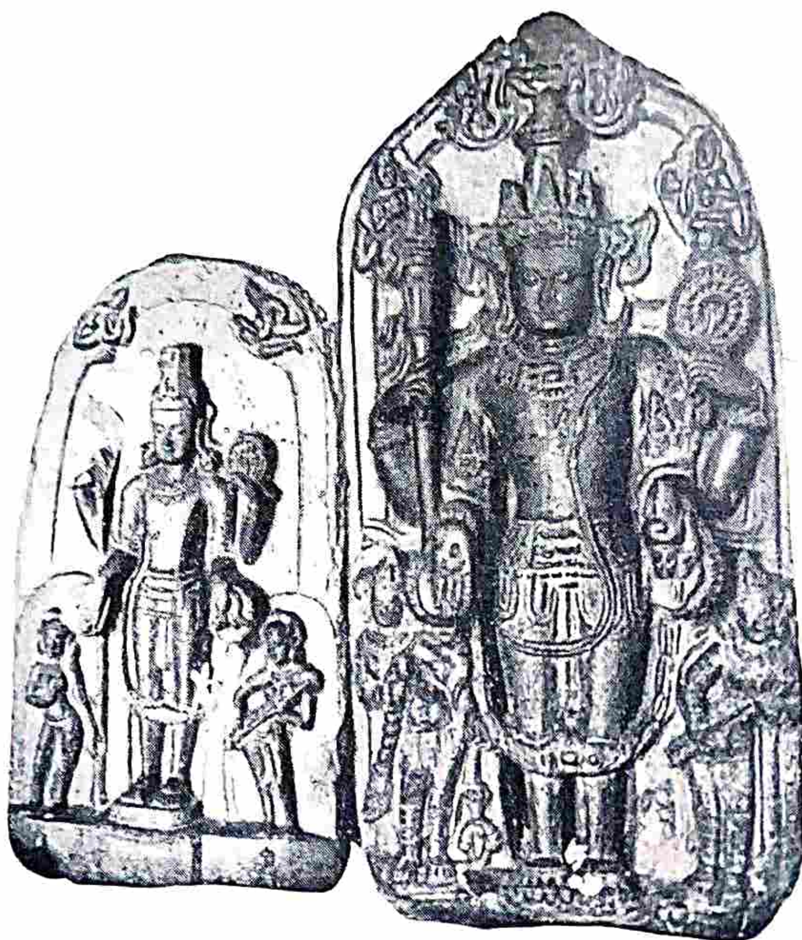


Fig. BR-2—Dancing Gaṇeśa (Birpur)



Fig. BR-3—Viṣṇu I (Birpur)



FIGS. BR-4—Viṣṇu II(*a*) & II(*b*) (Birpur)



FIG. BR-5—Narasiṃha (Birpur)

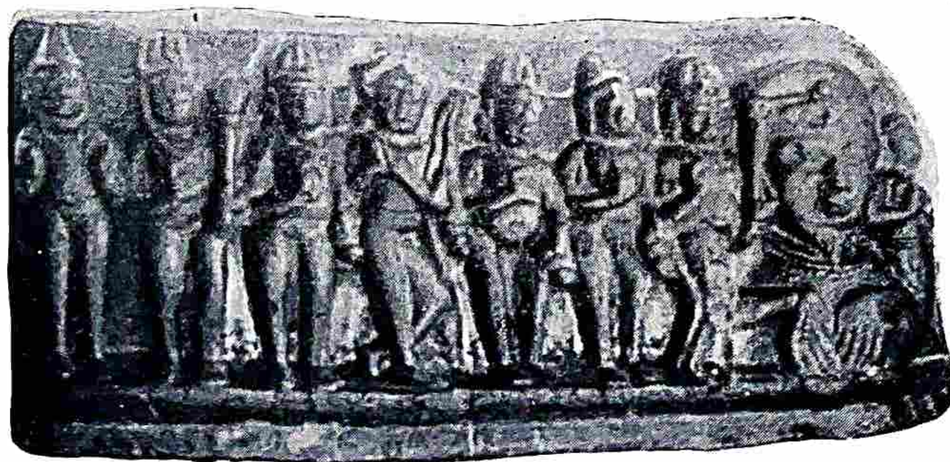


FIG. BR-6—Navagraha (Birpur)



Fig. BR-7—Lokeśvara (Birpur) discovered about 30 years ago now installed in a village temple

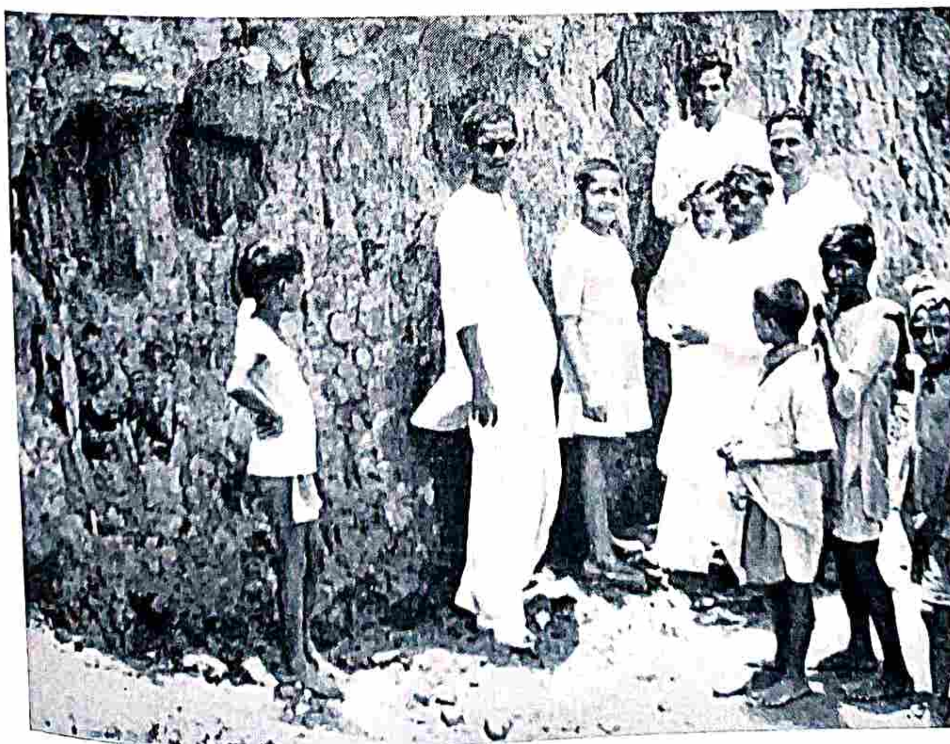


Fig. BR-8—The site of discovery of the images (Birpur)



Fig. BRA-1—Nava Durgā (Baraipura)
(discovered about 30 years ago
and installed in a temple)

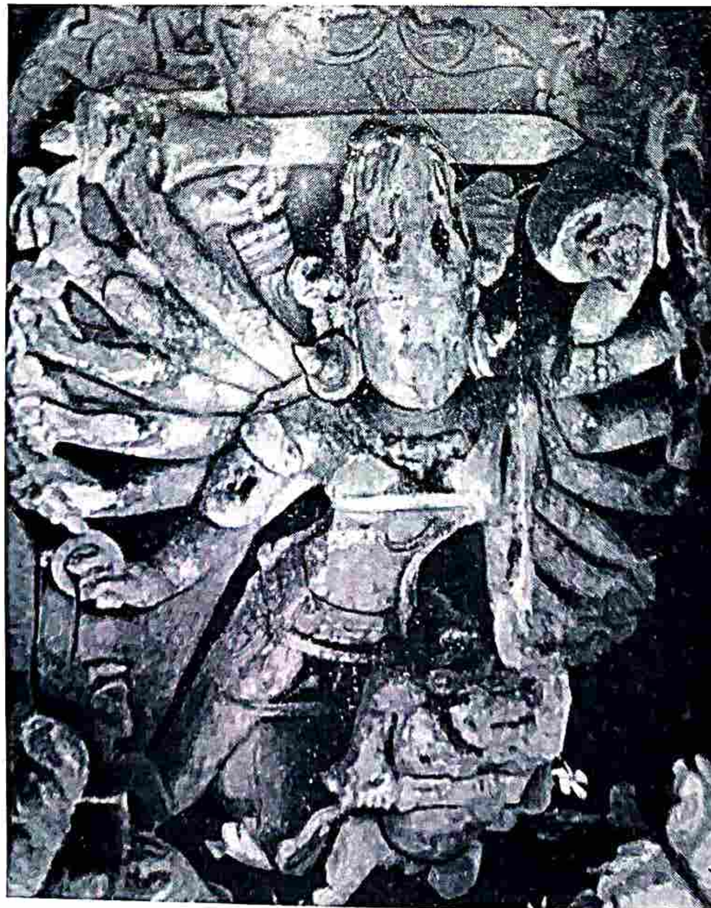


Fig. BRA-2—Kāli (Baraipura)
(discovered about 30 years ago and
now installed in a temple)

BRA-2 Nava Durgā

She appears in battle armed with dreaded weapons. Right hands have elephant goad, thunderbolt, chisel, stick mace, discus, arrow, sword while the left one holds *Tarjanī mudrā*, the tuft of hair of demon, shield, bow, flag, kettledrum, mirror, bell and *Nāgapāśa*. The composition of the image corresponds to the description of the goddess Nava Durgā, given in the *Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa* (Gopinath Rao-*Hindu Iconography*-I (ii)-114-115).

These images are some of the best specimens of the Pāla art and may be kept under the Eastern School of medieval Sculpture. Though the Pālas were Buddhists, they were tolerant and patronised all sects. There was no sectarian jealousy. Dharmapāla and Vigrahapāla III are credited in their official records for maintaining the orthodox social system and Nārāyaṇapāla is credited in the Bhagalpur grant with having constructed Śiva temples in Tirhut. The discoveries at Birpur strengthen this point of view that the Pālas patronised all sects. In the regions of Naulāgarh, Jayamaṅglāgarḥ,[12] Birpur, Balirājagarh, Mahisi, Balbāgarhi and other places, images of different Hindu gods and goddesses have been discovered in large numbers. The Pālas made liberal grants to the Brāhmaṇas. Vaiṣnavism and Śaivism were equally prominent during the period. Had that not been the case, there was no need of constructing thousand temples at *Makuṭika* grāma in Kalaśapota of the Kakṣa Viṣaya in Tīrabhukti.[13] Mithilā was the home of the learned Brāhmaṇas. All these images were possibly preserved in a temple made of bricks and vareigated stones. It seems that the temple was destroyed near about the 13th century A.D. Since all the images are in a perfect state of preservation, it can be suggested that all these images were thrown intentionally in a tank or a well when the people of the locality apprehended invasion.

To me, it seems that about 1290-91 A.D., when Firuz Aitigin, the Bengal Governor of Kaikaus, came to this side, as is evident from his Maheśwārā Inscription (edited by me in the *ABORI*-1956), he destroyed this temple and erected a big mosque near about the area. The Karṇāṭas were then ruling in Tirhut but they were not in a position to measure swords with their Muslim counterparts.

Vaiṣṇavism seems to have been a prominent feature in the Pāla period. The discovery of a large number of Viṣṇu images from Bengal and Bihār bears testimony to this fact. We have in our Birpur finds three images of

[12] Cf. *G. D. College Bulletin Series* Nos. 1 and 2

[13] R. K. Choudhary—'*Inscriptions of Bihar*'—the Bhagalpur Copperplate of Nārāyaṇapāla.

Viṣṇu, one of Narasiṁha, one of Varāha (incarnation of Viṣṇu) at Jayamaṅglāgarh and one of Viṣṇu at Naulāgarh. The development of this system had a hand in the growth of the *avatāra* theory and the Pālas were aware of it. Though the systematisation of the theory of *Avatāra* took place in the *Bhāgvatapurāṇa*, the Pala inscriptions refer to several *avatāras* like Varāha, Narasiṁha, Vāmana and Paraśurāma. Jayadeva mentions the ten *avatāras*. Thus the Pāla records speak of both the system which prevailed in eastern India in those days. The respect for *Nandī* seems to have been great and its worship indicates that even the *Vāhanas* had a place in the religious set-up. The *Bull* had a respectable position and we learn from the *Panchobh-Copperplate* of Saṁgrāmagupta that the Bull was the insignia of that family, because Saṁgrāmagupta himself was a devout worshipper of Māheśwara. The images of Birpur and Baraīpura show that almost all the sects, prevalent during the Pāla period, were known to the people of this area. If thoroughly explored and excavated, these regions will yield sufficient material for the reconstruction of the political and cultural history of North Bihar.

III

Punchmarked Coins from Patuaha (Saharsa) and Bahera (Darbhanga)

In course of our search for objects of antiquarian value, we came to learn of the discovery of a hoard of coins at Patuāhā in the district of Saharsa. Patuāhā is situated on the bank of one of the dead channels of the river Tilāwe (a branch of Kośī) in the district of Saharsa. The village was formerly known as Kumhara and the name Patuāhā is a recent one. Various brick-structures were unearthed during the last fifty years and along with them some coins were also noticed. The village has been subjected to devastations of the Kośī and hence nothing could be preserved intact.

The present coins (vide Plate—*PAC*) were discovered in the wake of the construction of a new macadamised road running from Saharsa to Madhipura. The labourers, while digging the earth in May-June 1958, found an earthen pot and when they came to learn that the said pot contained silver coins, all of them fell out and the pot was broken to pieces. The pot-cover (*Ḍhakṇā*) is preserved. It is round-shaped and is about 2-2½″ in diameter. The pot was found on the highland. In this connection, I extend my thanks to Paṇḍit Bhubneśwara Jhā, who took pains to preserve these few coins left, Professor Jagadīśwara Jhā of Saharsa College and Professor Karuṇākumāra Jhā of Madhipura College. All of them made frantic efforts to procure these coins for me. Most of the coins of the pot were melted away and sold and only these seven coins could be procured with great difficulty.

Punchmarked coins have been discovered in different parts of Bihār. In North Bihar, a big hoard of punchmarked coins was discovered from Purnea.[14] Such coins have come to light from Lauriyā Nandangarh, (Champāran), Aśurgarh[15] (Darbhanga), Golakhpur (Patna) and a smaller hoard of 58 coins from Gorhoghāt (Saharsa) and few coins from Jayamaṅglāgarh[16] and Baherā (vide—1st two coins of the plate). The prevalence of the punchmarked coins in such a large scale in Bihar is a remarkable feature and it helps us in ascertaining some fundamental issues of our economic history of the time. The arrangement for the issue of these coinage must have been in the hands of the then governments and our point of view stands testified by Kauṭilya who refers to Lakṣṇādhyakṣa.

Both Cunningham[17] and Dr. D. R. Bhaṇḍārkar[18] have discussed the question of the system of weights of the punchmarked coins. Mr. Hemmy has shown that the punchmarked coins agree with the indigenous Indus system of weights.[19] The weight was generally known as the *Rati* standard and Manu holds that the standard weight should be 32 *ratis* or 58.50 grains.[20] The full weight of the coin is not represented by any coin of the Purnea hoard which ranges from 38.5 to 55.8 grains. The Gorhodih coins do not weigh more than 53 grains. Kausambi believes that the varying weights probably "indicated the characteristic of the minting technique."[21] It seems plausible to suggest that reduction in weights was due to the debasement of coinage necessitated by economic exigencies.

All authorities agree that the punchmarked coins are the oldest indigenous currency of India. The copper coins were cast as early as the 5th century B.C. Nearchus holds that the Indians used only cast bronze but not hammered.[22] The casting of coins was a very early and ancient practice in India. The punchmarked coins are anonymous and they belong to a period ranging from the fifth century B.C. to the second century B.C. Rapson believed in the independent origin of the punchmarked coinage.[23] Mr. Walsh held that this coinage had been in existence long before the time of the Buddha since they are called *Purāṇa* in the *Jātakas*.[24] Cunningham believed that the punchmarked coins were certainly current in the time of the Buddha.[25]

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[14] *MASI* No. 62.
[15] *JBORS* XXV. pp. 55-57
[16] *G. D. College Bulletin Series No. 2*
[17] *Coins of Ancient India.*
[18] *Lectures on Ancient Indian Numismatics*
[19] *JRAS* (1937) pp. 1-26
[20] Manu VIII. 132
[21] D. D. Kosambi, *An introduction to the study of Indian history*
[22] Strabo, XV. C. 716
[23] *JRAS* 1895 p. 869.
[24] *JBORS*—V. 22.
[25] *Coins of India*, 43.

In the present state of our knowledge it is difficult to say when and where these coins were minted. Punchmarked coins are anonymous and no names are affixed thereon except few marks or signs. The *Svastika* and the *Nandipāda* marks on the Golakhpur coins also accur on certain Mauryan coins from Taxilā and elsewhere.[26] Marks No. 55 and 56 of the Gorhoghāt coins, "consists, in its complete form, of a central circular boss with a crescent on either side and what appears to be a doubled barbed arrowhead above and below."[27] With regard to this mark, Cunningham says—"Where only stamp is found on the reverse, it might possibly be peculiar symbol of the place of issue."[28] Dr. Banerjee-Śaśtri believed that the Taxila mark did not occur on any of the pre-Mauryan punchmarked coins of Golakhpur.[29] The Gorhoghat coins are of a later class and belong to the Mauryan period while Walsh considers that they were considerably anterior to the Nandas.[30] Many of the Gorhoghat coins are die-struck and are later than Golakhpur coins. The Purnea hoard coins are of six different shapes and sizes.[31]

Though a hoard was discovered at Patuāhā, only seven could be procured. These coins, *either*, must have formed a part of deposit of coin collectors *or* of such persons who might have kept them as a family deposit. Regarding the different marks, it has been held that the marks were stamped at the same time by different punches by the authority issuing them.[32] I am very much obliged to my friend Professor A. P. Chaturvedi, Head of the Department of Chemistry, G. D. College, Begusarai, who has spared no pains in washing these coins and in examining their chemical contents and size. To my collegue, Professor M. C. P. Srivāstava, I owe a word of gratitude as he has drawn up the sketches appended below. These coins are of pure silver. Some of them are blurred and do not admit of verification. A coin is characterised by its fabric, alloy and the legend.

On the basis of Kosambi's analysis of various marks, these Patuāhā and Baherā coins can be studied as follows (Cf. *JBBRAS* 1948-49, pp. 44-47).

(1) Coins Nos. 1 and 2 (Bahera) belong to the time of Dasaratha.
(2) Coins Nos. 3 and 4 do not admit of any verification as they are completely blurred and illegible. No. 2 is blurred.
(3) Coin No. 5 may be assigned to the period of Bindusāra or Aśoka.
(4) Coin No. 6 may be assigned to the reign of Dasaratha.
(5) Coin No. 7 may be assigned to the period of the Nandas.
(6) Coins Nos. 8 and 9 may be tentatively assigned to the period of the Nandas and the Mauryas.

[26] *JBORS*, XXV. p. 5
[27] *Ibid*. V. 469
[28] *Coins of India*. 56
[29] *JBORS* XXV. 7
[30] *JRAS*. 1937. pp. 303-4.
[31] *MASI*, No. 62. p. iii.
[32] *JRAS*. 1937. pp. 1-26

VIDE PLATE No. 'PAC' I

COIN NO.	SIZE	THICKNESS	WEIGHT	MARKS
(1)	1.98 cm X 2.06 cm.	.111 cm	2.7396 gm.	obv.-
	ROUND SHPE	FROM - "BAHERA" (DARBHANGA)		Rev- o
(2)	1.3 cm. X 1.22 cm.	.230 cm.	3.476 gm.	obv.-
	RECTANGULAR	FROM "BAHERA" (DARBHANGA)		Rev.- PLAIN
(3)	1.5 cm. X 1.67 cm.	.181 cm.	2.9356 gm.	obv.-
	ROUND SHAPE	- - - - - - - -		Rev.-
(4)	1.01 cm. X 1.48 cm.	.165 cm.	2.5298 gm.	obv.-
	ROUND SHAPE	- - - - - - - -		Rev.- PLAIN
(5)	1.41 cm. X 1.26 cm.	.240 cm.	3.3208 gm.	obv.-
	UNEVEN SQUARE	- - - - - - - -		Rev.-
(6)	1.27 cm. X 1.45 cm.	.220 cm.	3.5836 gm.	obv.-
	UNEVEN SQUARE	- - - - - - - -		Rev.-
(7)	1.52 cm. X 1.73 cm.	.154 cm.	2.9574 gm.	obv.-
	ROUND SHAPE	- - - - - - - -		Rev.- BLURRED
(8)	1.38 cm. X 1.46 cm.	.202 cm.	3.3620 gm.	obv.-
	UNEVEN SQUARE	- - - - - - - -		Rev.-
(9)	2.05 cm. X 1.41 cm.	.130 cm.	2.8282 gm	obv.-

These coins show tolerably good workmanship. There is a lack of the uniformity of thickness. They are of different variety,

IV

New discoveries from Jayamanglagarh

Jayamaṅglāgarh has escaped the detective eyes of the archaeologists. The details about the site were published by me in 1952 (vide- *G. D. College Bulletin Series No.* 2). It is situated at a distance of twelve miles north of Begusarai. In our exploration of the site on April 18, 1958, I was fortunate enough to find the rim of a broken vessel which possibly came from a depth of 20′. It appears that vessel was wheel-thrown and baked under proper heat. The main purpose of our visit on the 19th April, 1958, was to examine the finds, discovered in connection with the renovation of a tank under the Hard Manual Scheme of the Government. The tank is about 300′ long and 100′ wide. The western bank of the tank cuts through the outer wall of the settlement site. Three rows of wooden posts, five posts in each row and each post at a distance of $7\frac{1}{2}'$, are to be seen in the middle of the tank. Two outer posts, one in the left and other in the rear are also visible.

To me, it seems that these posts are the remnants of an ancient bridge. It was constructed probably to connect the settlement site with the stūpa in the north-east. My view was tentatively supported by Dr. K. C. Panigrahi who visited the site on July 6, 1958. Dr. R. S. Sharma also hinted the possibility of a bridge when he visited the site on April 19, 1958. Naturally if these posts be taken as remnants of an ancient bridge, it would prove a unique discovery in the history of Indian archaeology. My archaeologist friend Dr. R. C. P. Singh informs me that so far no remains of any ancient bridge have been found throughout this sub-continent.

Our second trip to Jayamaṅglāgarh was organised on the 6th July 1958, when Dr. K. C. Panigrahi, Superintendent of Archaeology, Mid-eastern circle, Patna, visited the site. Besides the staff of Dr. Panigrahi and the writer of these lines, Prof. K. S. Karamshil, Head of the Department of Political Science, G. D. College, Begusaria, also accompanied us. The whole site was surveyed for about three hours and we discovered pieces of *N.B.P.*, grey ware and various potsherds including one belonging to the Mughal period. The remnants of bridge seemed to be very prominent during our second visit in July. It was for the first time that we also visited the four adjacent mounds. These mounds are in a perfect state of preservation and looked like the Vedic burial mounds of Champaran. In April, 1959, Dr. Altekar also visited Jayamaṅglāgarh and he also collected some pieces of grey ware.

Our first exploration in April yielded the following finds:

(1) Terracotta Ram (Vide Plate—**JMC**—No. 4).

(2) Potteries (Vide Plate—**JMG**—No. 5).
(3) Carved Pillar (Vide Plate—**JMG**—No. 6).
(4) **JMG**—No. 1—gives the general view of the Jayamaṅglāgarh mound.
(5) **JMG**—No. 2—is the site-plan.
(6) **JMG**—No. 3—The exploration party which visited the site on 19-4-1958.

V

Exploration of Bangaon-Mahisi (Saharsā)

In the month of March 1958, the writer of these lines accompanied by Professor A. Kumar of G. D. College and Professor Chandramohan Khan of Katihār College visited Bangaon-Mahisi and explored the sites for two days. Bangaon is well-known to the scholars of ancient Indian history by the famous Bangaon copperplate of Vigrahapāla III and to the scholars of Hindi for being the residence of Lakṣmīnātha Gossāin (1777-1862) and Mr. John (1769-1846). Lakṣhmīnātha Gossāin has made definite contribution towards the development of Hindi poetry, Mahisi is considered to be the village-home of the renowned philosopher Maṇḍana Miśra.

Mahisi is about nine miles west of Saharsa Junction on the North-eastern Railway. Tradition associates Maṇḍana Miśra with Mahisi. Undoubtedly Mahisi is one of the important archaeological sites of Bihar, hitherto unexplored and now completely ravaged by Bihar's "river of sorrow". The discoveries in and around Mahisi will convince even a layman that it is one of the oldest sites of this state. In the early years of the present century, some punchmarked coins were discovered from Gorhoghat and in 1950, the Bangaon copperplate was discovered. At Kandāhā, there is a sun temple, the door frame of which bears the inscription of the Oinwāra king Narasiṁhadeva (*JBORS*—XX.). Near about Mahisi is the Bāneswara *Śivaliṅga*, said to be installed by the demon king Bāṇa. Mahisi is situated on the bank of river Dhemurā, a tributary of Kośī (cf—my article in the *SPARK*, Jan. 26, 1956).

At present there are a brick temple and two small huts in which the image of Tārā and other broken inscribed images of the Pāla period are housed. In the brick temple, there are images of Tārā, Nīlasarasvatī and Ekjalā. Statues of Bhairava, Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī and Pārvatī are kept on the verandāh. In the two small thatched huts are kept the images of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, Tripurāsundari, Sitalā and there are some broken specimens of relief. There is also an image of Tārānātha. Besides these, there are six *Kuṇḍas*, *viz.*, Tārākuṇḍa, Tārākañchukikuṇḍa, Vaśiṣṭhakuṇḍa, Gautamakuṇḍa, Akṣhobhyakuṇḍa, and Mānasarovarakuṇḍa. These *Kuṇḍas* are known to us from the book "*Chināchāratantra*" (now

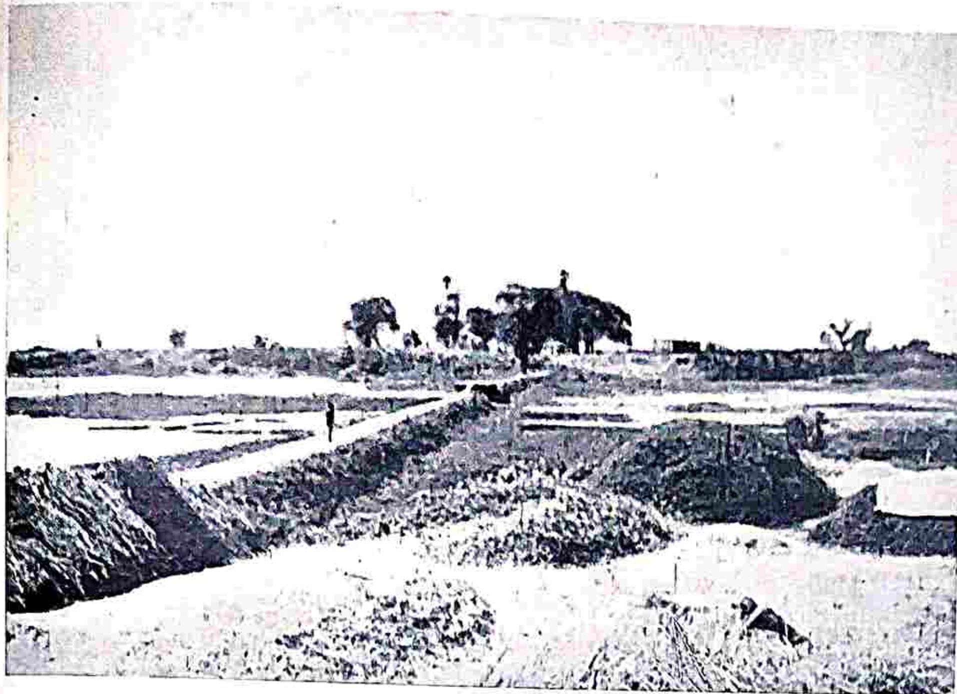
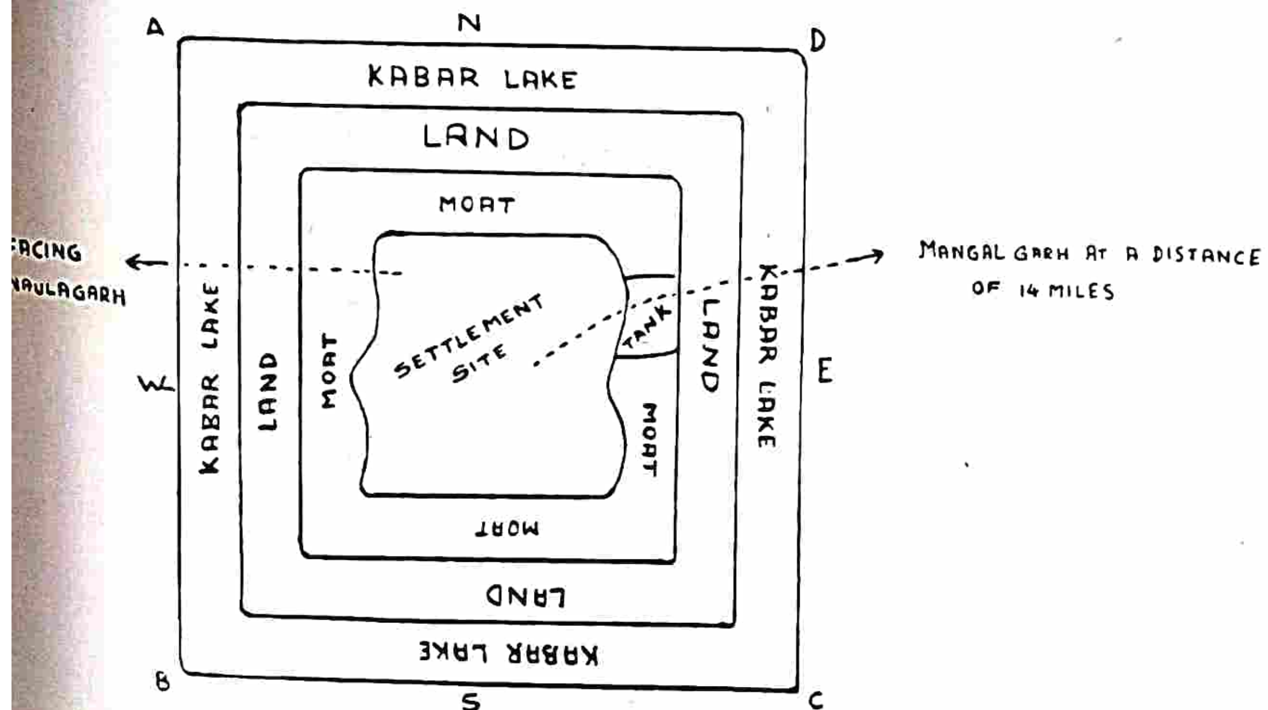


Fig. JMG-1—A general view of Jaimangla Garh Land

PLAN OF JAIMANGLA GARH

STUPA-SITE





PLAN AFTER PROF, R K CHOUDHARY.

Fig. JMG-2—Site showing the tank where the remains of a bridge have been found

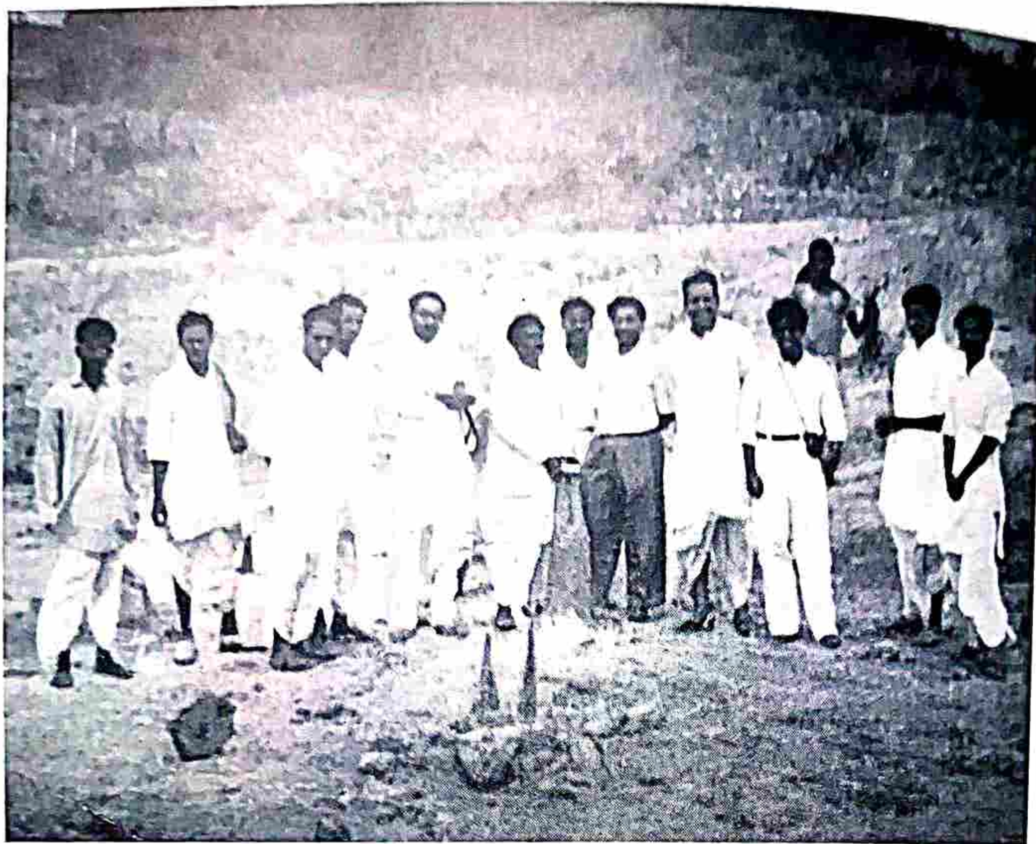


FIG. JMG-3—The exploration party (19.4.58) standing in the tank where wooden posts (remnants of bridge) are visible. Principal S. N. Singh, Profs. R. K. Chaudhary, A. Kumar, A. K. Sinha, Drs. Maharajkumar Raghubir Singh, R. S. Sharma and Upendra Thakur are seen in the picture



FIG. JMG-4—Terracotta (Ram) from Jaimaṅgla Garh



Fig. JMG-5—Potteries from Jaimaṅgla Garh



Fig. JMG-6—Carved Pillar at Jaimaṅgla Garh

kept in the Rāj Library, Darbhanga). The details about the *Kuṇḍas* are as follows :

वशिष्टकुण्डं पापघ्नं, कुण्डं च गौतमाभिधां
अक्षोभ्यकुण्डं सफलं, चैतज्जाभ्यदिशिस्मित ।
तत समीपे महेशाजि सरोमानस संज्ञकम् ।
माहिष्मत्याश्च महात्मश्रृणु साध्वि वरानने
वशिष्टं समानिता तारणी चीन देशतः ।
नारिम्येण जटाशक्ति तथा नील सरस्वती
अक्षोभ्य गुरुणायुक्ता स्थापिता यत्र सुन्दरी ।।

Greater portions of the region of Mahisi have been destroyed by the Kosī. The tradition is that Dakṣa performed a sacrifice in which neither Śiva nor Pārvatī was invited. Satī (Pārvati) went there of her own accord and she came to know of the insult of her husband. She jumped into the *yajñakuṇḍa*. Śiva came to know of it, and immediately hurried to the place and lifted the dead body of Satī. Śiva got irritated and to prevent Śiva, Viṣṇu proceeded with his *chakra* and began to cut down parts of the dead body. The eyes of Satī fell in Mahisi and since then it became an important centre of the *Tāntric* worship in Mithilā. Another tradition is that Vaśiṣṭha brought *Śakti* from China and placed her at Mahisi which was the den of the *Aśuras*. Local tradition believes that it was the capital of *Aśura* king, Mahiṣāsura, and Mahisi is named after him. It was Padmāvatī (Queen of Mahārāja Narendra Singh of Darbhanga) who established the present temple there. She hailed from Mahisi. Mithilā, since time-immemorial, has been the centre of *Tāntric* cult. It has been held by Mr. R. P. Chanda that the "*Śakti* cult was revealed in Gauḍa, popularised by the Maithilas, here and there prevails in Māhārāṣṭra and has disappeared in Gujerāt." (*Indo-Aryan Races*). The *Devīmāhātmya* in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* describes *Durgā* in the following words—"The energy of Śiva was on her face, Yama's power was in her hair, in her arms lay Viṣṇu's strength, her breasts were like unto the moon, her waist had the vigour of Indra, and her legs and thighs, the speed of Varuṇa. . ." *Nīlasarasvatī* of Mahisi may be identified with the *Tāntric* deity *Mahānīlasarasvatī* about whom we have a veiled reference in an inscription of Nayapāla found at Gayā (vide R. K. Choudhary—*Inscriptions*—P. 74—उरुनीलपद्मा). Tāntricism represents a particular phase of personal religion.

The *Mithilāmāhātmya* throws some light on Mahisi—There was a famous *Mandansār* in Mithilā—भार्गवंमण्डनज्वाच्छंविडालं रूक्मिणीसरः—(P. 27). There is a reference to *Mandanatīrtha* also—मार्गवैमण्डनंतीर्थपादप्रक्षालनं सरः (P. 37). Mahisi's association with *Tantricisim* is very old. We read in the *Śāktapīṭhas* (P. 47) त्रिसोतायां वामपादो भ्रामरी भैरवेश्वरः—Dr. D. C. Sircar suggests in the footnote of the above work "A. M. suggests another reading—तिरोतायां वाम पादस्वामरी भैरवोडमरः which refers to Tirhut—""मिथिलायां वामदेशे उग्रदेवी

मन्डोदरी" (P. 65). Mahisi's Tārā is known as *Ugratārā.* The origin of Maithila Tantricism may be traced to this place. Mahisi is said to be a *Siddhapiṭha*. The *Kubjikātantra* enumerates Māhiṣmati as one of the *Siddhapiṭhas*—

कमला विमला चैव तथा माहिष्मतीपुरी
वाराही त्रिपुरा चैव वाग्मती नीलवाहिनी

—If Śaṅkarāchārya's disputation with Maṇḍana of Mithilā or Mahisi be accepted as correct, we can safely say that Mahisi is at least as old as the 7th century A.D. Mr. K. T. Telang has tried to prove that Śaṅkarācharya was a contemporary of king Pūrṇavarman of Magadha (*I.A.*—XIII, 96 ff.). In the Śaṅkarabhāṣya on the *Vedāntasūtra* II. 1, 17, we read—

नहि देवदतः स्रुघ्ने संनिधीय मानस्तदहरेव पाटलिपुत्रे संनिधीयंते युगपदनेकत्र वृतावनेकत्र प्रसंगाद्देवदत्त यज्ञदत्तयोरिव स्रुघ्नपाटलिपुत्र निवासिनोः—
नहि वंवंध्यापुत्रो राजा बभूव प्राक्पूर्णवर्मणोभिषेकादित्येवंजातीयकेन . . . .

Telang says—"a king of that name mentioned by Hiuentsang was ruling at Magadha (also Cf. *ASR*—I. 7; III. 135). Śankara was at Benares before and immediately after he actually wrote his Bhāṣya (*IA*—XIII. 97). . . the passages in his Bhāṣya refer to places to the north of the Vindhyas (Cf. his Bhāṣya on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* pp. 719-901) . . . *Bhāṣya* was written after the coronation of Pūrṇavarmana. Śaṅkara was an eye-witness of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's self-immolation" (P. 100). Seventh century A.D., though politically decadent, was an age of intellectual giants. Galaxy of scholars in eastern India graced the scene of cultural horizon. Bāṇa, Mayūra, Daṇḍī, Maṇḍana and Śaṅkara may be taken as contemporaries (Cf. *IA*—I. 299).

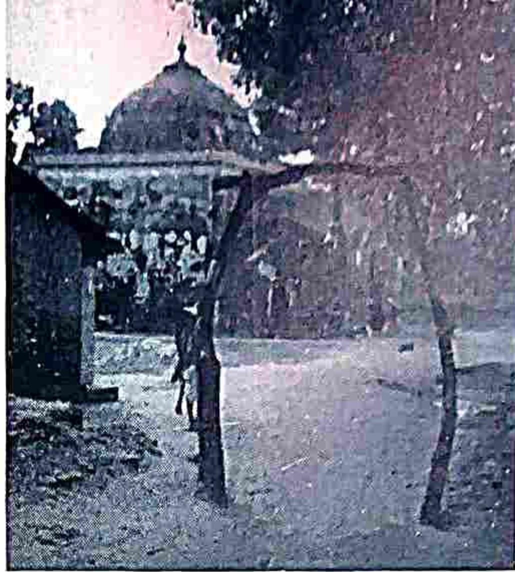
Some important pottery pieces and bricks of Mahisi bear testimony to the fact that it is an ancient site and it must have been a seat of learning in the days of yore. The surrounding areas of Mahisi are also important. The territory of Mahisi stands well defined in a folk-song—

—उत्तर दिशि नेपाल हिमालय दक्षिण भागल गंगा
पूरब भाग पुरनिश्रा विलसित पश्चिम अछि दरिभंगा।

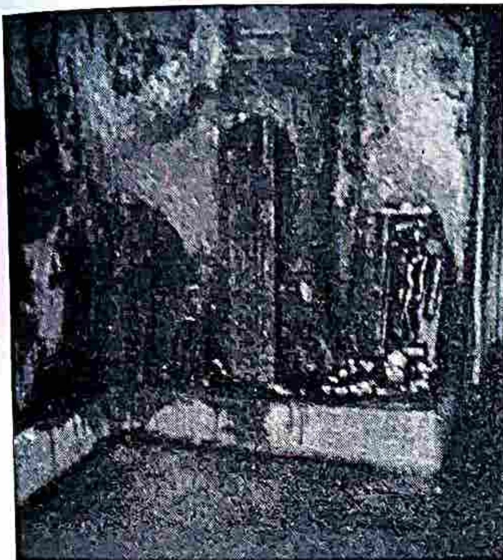
There is a temple of *Āditya* at Kandāhā. In the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, there is a chapter on the method of worshipping the sun. Kandāhā inscription of Narasiṁhadeva has been referred to above. The story runs that in ancient time, the priest stealthily took away the oil, meant for the Pujā and he was cursed. On the north side of the temple there is a village called Telahara (village of oil thiefs). How and when this temple came to be established is not definitely known. From the inscription on the door frame, it can be presumed that Narasiṁhadeva Oinwāra possibly constructed this temple. Three miles east of Kandāhā is the temple of Bāṇeśwara Mahādeva in Devanagopāl. Tradition attributes this *Liṅga* to *Bāṇāuśra*. The most important point to be noted, in this connection, is



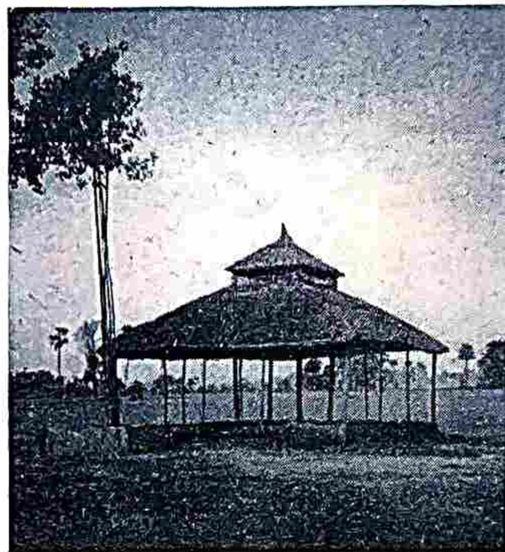
MI-1—Image of Tārā (Mahisi)



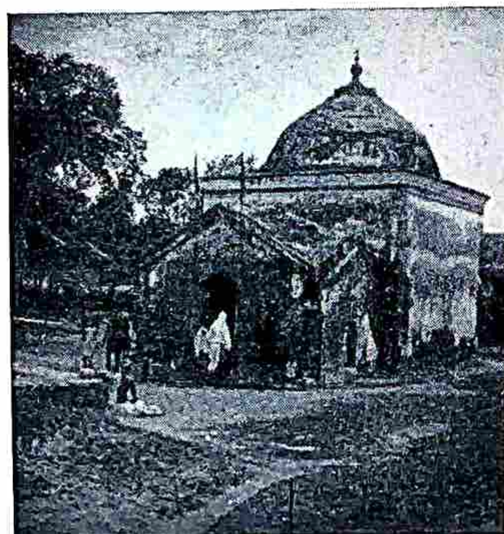
MI-2—Full view of Tārā Temple (Mahisi)



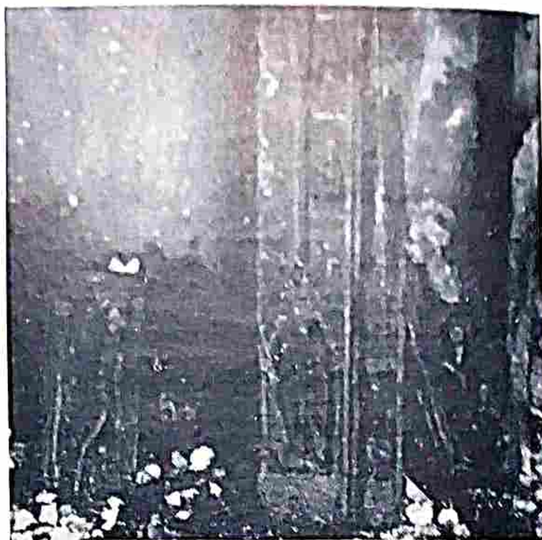
MI-3—Images within the hut (Mahisi)



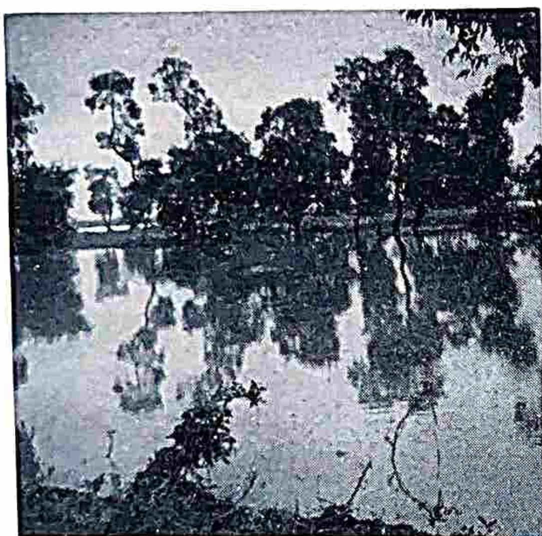
MI-4—The place said to be the residence of Maṇḍaṇa Miśra (Mahisi)



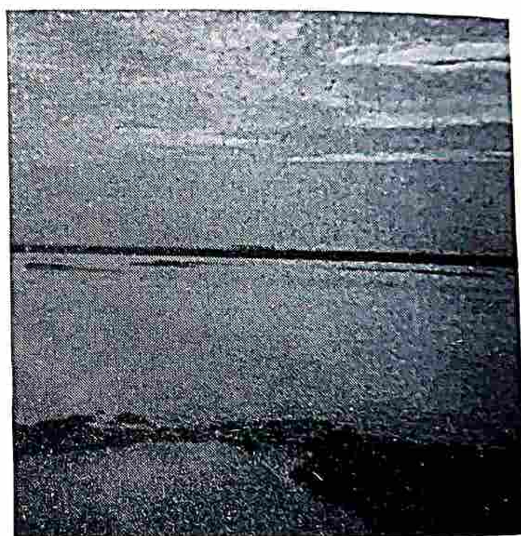
MI-5—The Brick Temple (Mahisi)



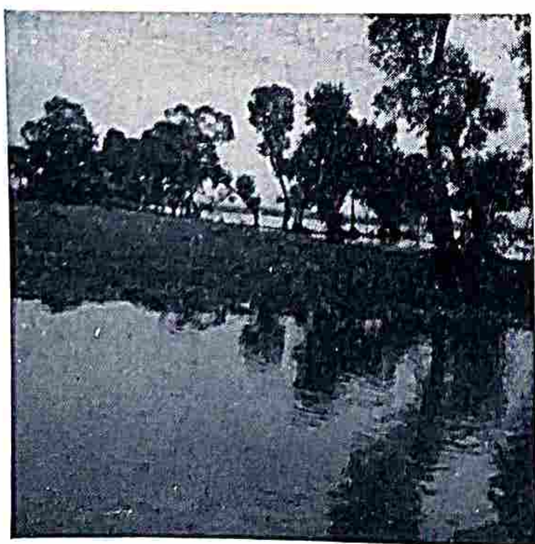
MI-6—The door frame (Mahisi)



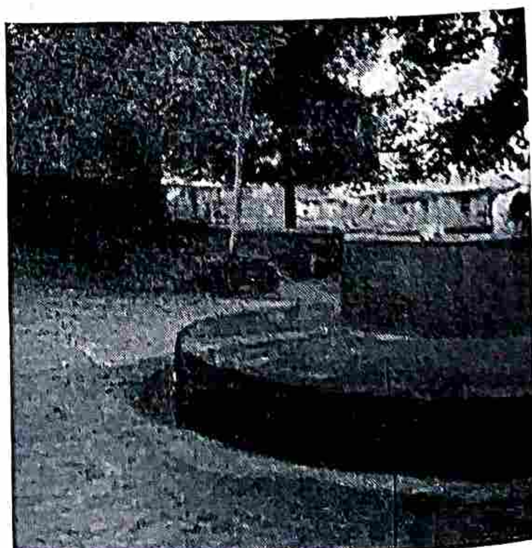
MI-7—Tarākañchuki and Vaśiṣṭha Kuṇḍas (Mahisi)



MI-8—Mānasarovara Kuṇḍa

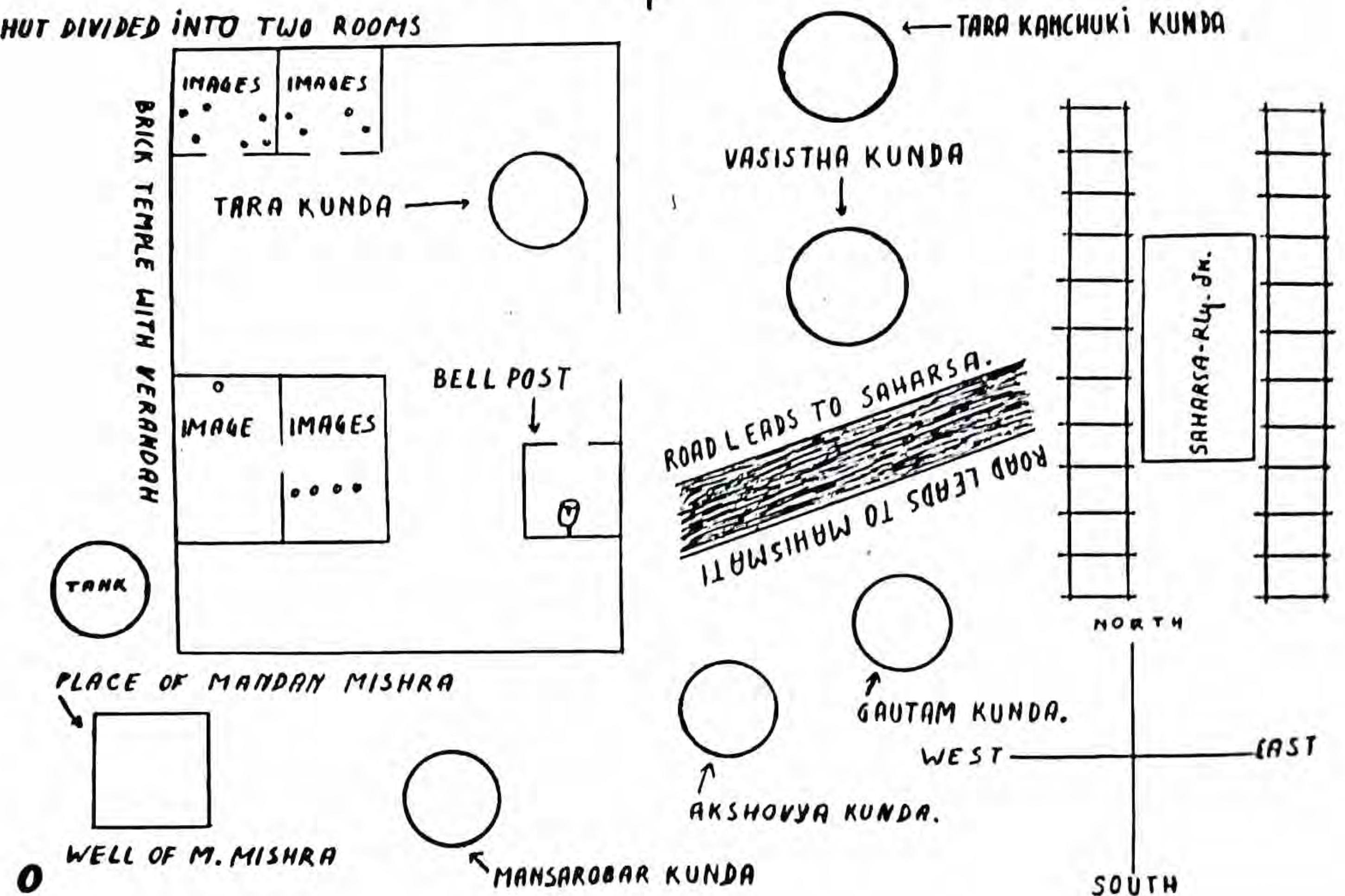


MI-9—Gautama Kuṇḍa and Akṣobhya Kuṇḍa



MI-10—Tārā Kuṇḍa (Mahisi)

Site of Mahismati:— PREPARED by PROF R.K. Choudhary.



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that Tārā, Bhavāditya and Bāṇeśvara are established on triangular points (त्रिकोणयन्त्र) which definitely indicates the *Tāntric* importance of the region of Mahisi. Tradition is preserved in the following folk song—

भवा भवादित देवना महेश
वनगाँ (Bangāon) दूर्गा मिटेकलेश
बलोरे मधुरी वाणी दूर्गा

On the western side of the Kandāhā temple there is a temple of *Banadurgā*. This is identified with *Banadurgā* of the *Gāyatripaṭala*. Though the statue has been destroyed, only two feet are left. On the *Jalaḍhari*, there is a mouth of crocodile carved out of a black stone. Five miles north-west of Kandāhā is Devanban Mahādeva, considered to be very sacred by the local people.[33]

MAHISI PLATES:

(1) **MI**—No. 1—Image of Tārā.
(2) **MI**—No. 2—Full view of the temple of Tārā
(3) **MI**—No. 3—Images in the hut
(4) **MI**—No. 4—Place of Maṇḍano Miśra
(5) **MI**—No. 5—Brick temple
(6) **MI**—No. 6—Door frame in Blackstone
(7) **MI**—No. 7—Vaśiṣṭhakuṇda
(8) **MI**—No. 8—Mānasarawarakuṇḍa
(9) **MI**—No. 9—Akṣobhya and Gautama Kuṇḍa
(10) **MI**—No. 10—Tārākuṇḍa
(11) Plan of Mahisi

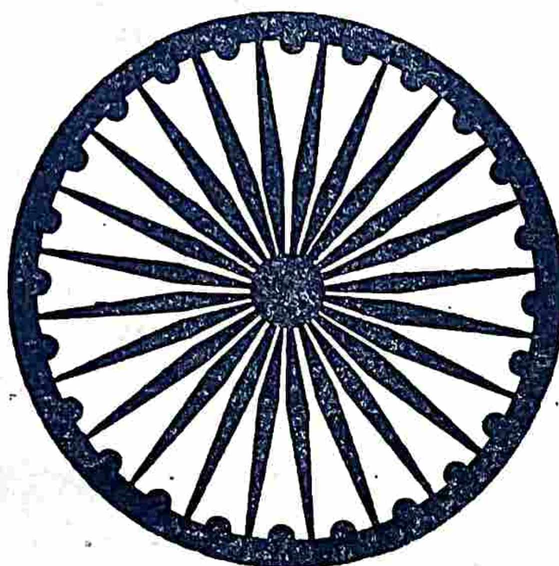
KEY TO THE PLATES

(1) **BE**—Bahera Excavations
(2) **BR**—Birpur
(3) **BRA**—Baraipurā
(4) **JGM**—Jayamaṇglāgarh
(5) **MI**—Mahisi
(6) **PAC**—Patuāha Coins

[33] As compared with Punaura (Dist. Muzaffarpur), said to be the birth place of Sitā, Mahisi is yet a better site for archaeological exploration and excavation. In February 1959, I visited Punaura with a view to assessing its historical and archaeological importance. Punaura, as it is today, does not seem to be very old. Temples and images are all of recent origin. No pottery or broken sherds or pieces are available. The oldest alleged relic can not be pushed beyond few centuries. Excavations may reveal to us something but there is no *prima-face* evidence to infer that Punaura was the birth place of Sitā. We have to reserve our comments till excavators' spades bring something new to light.

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